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OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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January 18, 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD:

SUBJECT: Release of POWs in Korea

On January 15th, 1954, the Board Assistants, acting in behalf of their principals, approved the attached paper entitled, "Probable Action Regarding Release of 22,000 Non-repatriated POWs and Preliminary Checklist of Measures to Exploit this Situation," together with its Annex "A", entitled, "Preliminary Checklist of Contingencies Regarding Release of 22,000 Non-repatriated POWs Prepared by the OCB Staff in Consultation with the Working Group."

Elmer B. Staats
Elmer B. Staats
Executive Officer

Attachment:

1. Probable Action Regarding Release of 22,000 Non-repatriated POWs and Preliminary Checklist of Measures to Exploit this Situation dtd 1/15/54 w/Annex "A"

NSC review(s) completed.

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OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

January 15, 1954

PROBABLE ACTION REGARDING
RELEASE OF 22,000 NON-REPATRIATED POWs
and
PRELIMINARY CHECKLIST OF MEASURES
TO EXPLOIT THIS SITUATION

1. Probable Action by the NNRC

- a. On the basis of unofficial reports, the Indian Custodial Forces (ICF) will return the 22,000 non-repatriated POWs to allied and communist captors beginning January 20, three days before their scheduled release as civilians. They will be returned as prisoners-of-war and not as "civilians". The disposition of ninety-six North Koreans and Chinese who requested the opportunity to go to neutral nations is so far undecided. The returned POWs will have the further choice of whether they wish to take up civilian life or enlist in the ROK or Chinese Nationalist armies.
- b. General Thimayya has warned both Commands that if they change the status of the POWs they will "not be in conformity" with the Armistice. The General interprets the Armistice Agreement to mean that the two Commands can not free the prisoners until all have received explanations and a Korean Peace Conference has discussed the future of the POWs.

2. Probable Action by the UN Command

- a. General Taylor will accept the POWs as they are released and will carry out plans for their disposition as outlined in Paragraph 3.b.(1) of the OCB memorandum entitled "Preliminary Checklist of Contingencies Regarding Release of 22,000 Non-Repatriated POWs Prepared by the OCB Staff in Consultation With The Working Group" of January 13, 1954.
- b. The probable US-UN position in this situation is that we do not concur in General Thimayya's interpretation of his responsibility or of the Armistice Agreement. In our view, according to the Armistice Agreement, the POWs become civilians at 12:01 A.M., January 23d. The NNRC and the CFI have an obligation to interpret the Armistice Agreement and neither side can change this obligation. Furthermore, the NNRC must interpret the Agreement on their own responsibility; we are not in a position to acquiesce in such an interpretation.

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- c. Psychological and military planning for handling the release of the POWs is taking into account the strong possibility of violence occurring among the POWs during the process.

3. Exploitation Measures Taken to Date

- a. The UN Command has briefed all news media representatives on the plans and projected operations of the 8th Army regarding the release, reception, and evacuation from the Demilitarized Zone of all non-repatriate prisoners-of-war.
- b. Arrangements have been made to give media all possible access to activities dealing with the evacuation and transfer of the PWs from NNRC custody.
- c. Public statements by top UN Command officials, enunciating the firm intent of the UN Command to facilitate the release and evacuation of the PWs, have been made in support of the US national policy on the matter.
- d. USIA has made arrangements for sending two additional information specialists to Korea to ensure that the release of the prisoners and any other developments are given full coverage. Material obtained by the USIS staff in Korea will be sent to the Press, Radio and Motion Picture Service for world-wide exploitation.
- e. Advance information policy guidance on the general Korean situation, with particular reference to upcoming events has been airmailed to all USIS posts.
- f. A briefer telegraphic information policy guidance has been sent to selected posts and all military commands (USITO 194, 13 Jan. 1954). Policy lines have been coordinated with the Departments of State and Defense.

4. Exploitation Measures Being Considered for the Future

a. USIA

- (1) Additional information policy guidance will be issued as required by substantive developments, such as those listed as contingencies in the OCB POW Working Group paper of January 13th.
- (2) Statements, speeches or releases of U.S. military or other government officials, concerning the prisoner release or of related developments will be exploited

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through USIA Press and Radio Services. Similar treatment will be given to appropriate statements, etc. of foreign government spokesmen.

- (3) Appropriate US and foreign press comment will be repeated by USIA information media.
- (4) In the belief that this event can be exploited with maximum effectiveness through sustained follow-up after the release, USIA will seek to insure that the former prisoners' individual stories of why they chose freedom are told fully in the world press in the months following their release. A special effort will be made to demonstrate that those POWs who chose the Army as a way of life did so voluntarily.
- (5) A special effort will be made to appropriately present this event to the peoples of Asia.

b. The Department of State will:

- (1) Prepare and forward to OCB for appropriate dissemination a list of guidances previously issued on this subject;
- (2) Consider issuing, before January 20th, a statement clarifying the US-UN position in answer to the Thimayya letter and probable NNRC action, especially warning of possible disruptive action by communist-directed agents included in the non-repatriated returned POWs.
- (3) Probably have the Under Secretary of State issue a statement on January 23rd;
- (4) Attempt to have Ambassador Lodge issue a statement;
- (5) Encourage Department speakers on foreign policy to include the subject of non-forcible repatriation in their remarks;
- (6) Include appropriate discussion of this issue in the upcoming UNC Report to the reconvened General Assembly, probably in February;
- (7) Within the Exchange of Persons program, explore the possibility of allocating an educational fellowship grant to one Chinese and one Korean POW.

c. The Central Intelligence Agency will:

- (1) Support this program as they are able.

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d. The OCB Staff will:

- (1) Inquire into the desirability and appropriate way of exploiting the POW petitions "signed in blood" and sent to President Eisenhower, Lester Pearson and General Mark Clark.

ENCLOSURE: (1)

CONFIDENTIAL - ANNEX "A" January 13, 1954 "Preliminary Checklist of Contingencies Regarding Release of 22,000 Non-Repatriated POWs Prepared by the OCB Staff in Consultation with The Working Group"

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Annex "A"

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OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

January 13, 1954

PRELIMINARY CHECKLIST OF CONTINGENCIES REGARDING
RELEASE OF 22,000 NON-REPATRIATED POWs PREPARED
BY THE OCB STAFF IN CONSULTATION WITH THE WORKING
GROUP

1. The Problem

- a. To explore the most likely contingencies regarding the release in Korea of 22,000 non-repatriated POWs together with probable U.S. courses of action in the event of each contingency.

2. The Situation

- a. The Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission now has custody of some 22,000 North Korean and Chinese Communist non-repatriated POWs. Paragraph 11 of the Annex of the Korean Armistice Agreement provides for "the relief from the prisoner-of-war status to civilian status of any Prisoners-of-war who have not exercised the right to be repatriated and for whom no other disposition has been agreed to by the political conference within 120 days after the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission has assumed their custody." Accordingly, as of the end of the 22nd day of January non-repatriated POWs will become entitled to their freedom as civilians.
- b. Pursuant to an agreement reached with General Thimayya, on December 22nd General Hull, UN Commander, issued a statement announcing that on January 22nd non-repatriate prisoners would become entitled to their freedom as civilians and that they would be enabled to go to any available country of their choice. The U.S. has repeatedly stated since then that we insist upon the release of the POWs on January 22nd.
- c. The Communist Command, on the other hand, has demanded that the prisoners remain in neutral custody until a political conference on Korean problems has been convened and has discussed the prisoner-of-war issue for thirty days.

Annex "A"

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- d. The NNRC is considering these opposing views but has as yet not clearly made known its official position.

3. Contingencies and Probable US-UN Courses of Action

- a. All contingencies listed below are not co-equal. As of January 13th we are advised by the Department of State that the Government is proceeding on the assumption that there will be a peaceful release of the POWs on January 23rd. However, the possibility cannot be excluded that, contrary to this assumption, one of the other contingencies listed below may eventuate.

- b. The NNRC releases the POWs at midnight January 22nd pursuant to Par. 11 of the Annex of the Korean Armistice Agreement:

- (1) The 14,400 Chinese prisoners and the 7,700 North Korean POWs now in Indian custody will leave the demilitarized zone shortly after midnight at two separate points along the south border of the zone. The Koreans will board waiting trains and travel south at the rate of 1,000 per hour to reception centers at the East coast port of Pohang and the West coast port of Kunsan. There they will have the choice of enlisting in the ROK army or taking up civilian life in the Korean republic. The trains will pause briefly in Seoul for a mass welcoming by Korean men, women and children. The Chinese will travel by truck over guarded highways to a processing center near Inchon, where they will be received by representatives of Nationalist China. A few hours later the POWs will board 1,000-passenger LSTs and proceed to Formosa. The American LSTs are under contract to Japanese crews. Each will carry about one platoon of U.S. security troops. About 100 Nationalist Chinese will be on hand at the border of the demilitarized zone to greet the Chinese POWs and accompany them to Inchon and Formosa. The Eighth Army will provide food and any necessary clothing to the former POWs at the Inchon center. Hospitalized Chinese will be flown to Formosa via U.S. military aircraft.

- c. The NNRC releases the POWs prior to January 22nd

- (1) This may occur in order to avoid a determination by the NNRC that the POWs have become "civilians".
- (2) General Taylor will immediately move to corral the POWs and continue the orderly transfer as in 3,b,(1) supra,

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Annex "A"

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d. The NNRC refuses or fails to act and:

(1) the POWs effect their own physical release:

(a) This may occur if the NNRC, for any reason, does not take positive action to release the POWs.

(b) See 3,c.(2).

(2) the POWs remain passive resulting in maintenance of the status quo:

(a) The possibility of this contingency occurring is regarded as extremely remote.

e. The ROK Government intervenes with force to release the POWs

(1) The ROK Government has threatened this possibility.

(2) General Taylor has said that the U. S. Eighth Army would resist such a move.

f. The Communists attempt to halt the release of the POWs

(1) This has not been threatened but is a contingent possibility.

(2) General Taylor has said that such action would "most likely start the Korean War over again", that the Eighth Army is "alerted for any contingency" and that the Army is fully prepared for "orderly or emergency situations" that might arise from the release of the POWs.

g. The General Assembly is called into session and becomes seized of the POW problem


(1) It is highly probable that the Indians will have returned the POWs to the two sides on or about January 23 (before the General Assembly meets). However, the possibility that India may decide to hold the POWs until the General Assembly meets can not be entirely excluded. Both General Nam Il, North Korea's Foreign Minister, and Chou En Lai, Chinese Communist Premier and Foreign Minister, have urged that a General Assembly session be seized of the POW question.

(2) The United States believes that the General Assembly has no legal authority under the Armistice Agreement to make any decision regarding the treatment of POWs. The United States is, therefore, strongly opposed to any attempt to have the General Assembly decide whether or in what manner the POWs are to be released.

16 March 1954

Comments on OCB paper

We agree in general that US-ROK economic relationships are likely to become increasingly strained, but we know no reason for anticipating a crisis at any specified time, such as May or June. Although the ROK government is making strenuous efforts to achieve a rapid rate of economic development, the greatest frictions between the US and South Korea will probably not develop directly out of the implementation of this program. Because of the extreme nationalism and touchiness of the Rhee government, friction is more likely to arise over US control of ROK expenditure of funds, i.e., procurement financed by US aid funds, procurement in Japan, and the utilization of ROK foreign exchange resources.



R. J. Smith

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REMARKS: *This is ONE opinion
on progress report on
NSC 170/1 (also attached)*